

# Boat-owner's diary

The PBO 'family' share their boat-owning treats, trials and tribulations



## A Polly-gamous union



All that knot-tying practice pays off as Ben Meakins gets hitched

**S**teph and I got married last month. And, when you're as obsessed with boats as we are, there's really only one way to do it. We were married on the riverbank at the top of the River Hamble, with wellies to complement the smart clothes, followed by a picnic on the bank. Later, the spring ebb swept us along as we rowed the four miles down the river to the sailing club for the reception and a cake decorated with signal flags.

'As we all know, there are really three people in this marriage,' said Ed, the Best Man, during his speech. 'Ben, Steph; and *Polly*.' True to form, we sailed off the following day for our honeymoon – on *Polly*, our Impala 28. We'd

picked a good week, with light winds and glorious sunshine. Perfect, you might think, for a trip west to the Jurassic Coast, or perhaps a cross-Channel jaunt?

Well, we had entertained plans to sail further than the Solent, but after a week of little sleep leading up to the wedding, a week of relaxation suddenly appealed. The clincher came when we unwrapped a pair of Micro Magic radio-controlled model yachts. So, instead of sailing *Polly* to pastures new, she swung to her anchor in her old haunts while we match-raced the models around her,

**Fair weather had enticed the rest of the world out**



**ABOVE** Ben and Steph row off into the sunset... well, almost **LEFT** A nautical wedding cake dressed overall!

much to the amusement of the other boats anchored nearby.

Despite it being September and the first week back at school, the fair weather had enticed the rest of the world out, and every anchorage heaved with boats. In Newtown we anchored just north of Clamerkin Lake in, we thought, plenty of water. But an ever-increasing list half an hour before low water showed we'd miscalculated by a few feet. A red-faced half-hour passed before it got dark enough to hide our

shame, and we floated free at 11pm to re-anchor elsewhere.

On our return to reality, I was admonished by a non-sailing friend. 'You took your new wife for your honeymoon on *that*?' he said in disbelief, looking at *Polly* and her less-than-standing headroom. But Steph was as keen as I. I'm a lucky man!

■ PBO's features editor, Ben Meakins, and his wife Steph co-own *Polly*, an Impala 28, with friends. They keep her on the Hamble on a river mooring

## Fin class racing?



David Pugh enjoys sort-of racing in convivial circumstances, then *Red Dragon* joins a school

**W**e've been racing! Well, sort of. The last weekend of the boat show saw six Contessa 26s competing in their first National Championships, which the Co32 Association hosted at the same time as their own Nationals at the Lyminster Town Sailing Club.

The weekend demonstrated the difference between dedicated racers and dabblers, with three IRC-rated boats leading the fleet and ourselves in a good-natured scrap with two other boats to fill in the bottom of the table, racing on a made-up but equal rating. We knew we would never catch the other three, who were sailing stripped-out boats with laminate sails as opposed to our cruising cloth and boatloads of

**Champagne sailing to a yachtsman's gale in three-and-a-half hours**

beer, but it didn't matter. The sailing was challenging and the social side highly entertaining, as the members of the Co32 Association proved that although you don't have to be mad to join them, you'll be the odd one out if you're not.

Unfortunately for our standing in the race table, we opted to take the early morning tide home to Poole on Sunday and miss the last race. The forecast was for 20-25 knot easterly, which would later become cyclonic and rise to perhaps Force 8 – the seamanlike thing was to take our leave and the proffered easterly and have a downwind trip home.

We passed Hurst Castle and its notorious overfalls in flat water with a gentle 10-knot breeze wafting us along. The flat water continued



**A porpoise accompanies *Red Dragon* near Christchurch Ledge**

across at least half of Christchurch Bay, while the building breeze justified our choice not to put up the spinnaker but pole out our 150% genoa instead. By the time we reached Christchurch Ledge we were creaming along at over six knots with a couple of knots of tide underneath us – and a school of porpoises teaching their kids their clearances under our bow.

As we continued across Poole Bay the lumpiness increased: we opted to take the main shipping channel into the harbour rather than the shallow Looe Channel close inshore. This meant coming onto a reach. We had already

reefed the genoa and got rid of the pole, so we hove to and pulled down two reefs in the main. *Red Dragon* let us get on with the job with none of the slatting sails and heaving decks which can conspire to throw your mast crew over the side. Job done, we sailed into the channel in time to be driven into the harbour by a 30-knot rain squall.

Champagne sailing to a yachtsman's gale, all in three-and-a-half hours: who said sailing at home was dull!

■ PBO's deputy editor David Pugh and his two siblings jointly own *Red Dragon*, a Contessa 26 that they keep moored in Poole Harbour